



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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22 Jul 1986

MARINE CORPS ORDER 1610.12

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: Distribution List

Subj: U.S. Marine Corps Counseling Program

Ref: (a) NAVMC 2795, USMC User's Guide to Counseling

1. Purpose. To publish policy and instructions concerning the establishment of the U.S. Marine Corps Counseling Program.

2. Effective Date. 1 August 1986.

3. Information

a. Various studies and research efforts have determined that when fitness report preparation and counseling are accomplished at the same time, the result is inflated evaluations and ineffective counseling. Fitness report preparation is a single action focused on the past performance of a Marine. The fitness report is a personal communication between reporting officials and the Commandant of the Marine Corps; it is not a counseling document. Counseling must be a series of efforts which focus on bettering a Marine's future performance. These efforts must be continuous, well-planned, and skillfully applied. Both types of action are necessary to the vitality of a dynamic organization; both have a common element, the Marine; yet, both must function separately.

b. Counseling is that part of leadership which ensures, by mutual understanding, that the efforts of leaders and their Marines are continuously directed toward increased unit readiness and effective individual performance. There are as many counseling techniques and as many leadership styles as there are Marine leaders. The U.S. Marine Corps Counseling Program is not intended to encroach on individual leadership styles, rather it is to complement them to the benefit of the Marine Corps leaders and especially their junior Marines. With education and experience, all Marine leaders can use counseling skills and techniques within the context of their own leadership style.

4. Program Objectives. The counseling program will achieve the following:

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- a. Maintain counseling as an integral and continuous part of traditional Marine leadership.
- b. Develop counseling skills through a continuing education program that teaches the importance of daily coaching and provides the tools to conduct effective counseling.
- c. Increase individual performance and productivity through counseling and thereby increase unit readiness and effectiveness.
- d. Enhance the leader's ability to improve the junior's performance.
- e. Create the ethic of effective counseling in a climate of solid leadership and provide a system to enhance that ethic. By so doing, the program will ensure that the leadership goals captured in General Lejeune's words become reality:

"...The relation between officer and enlisted men should in no sense be that of superior and inferior nor that of master and servant, but rather that of teacher and scholar. In fact, it should partake of the nature of the relation between father and son,...."

This guidance has been determined to be of such significance that a change to the Marine Corps Manual states this guidance should also be applied to the relationship of noncommissioned officers and their subordinates.

5. Policy. Counseling is a tool of leadership universally recognized as essential to accomplishing the Marine Corps goals of developing juniors, improving individual performance, and enhancing unit productivity. Therefore:

- a. Every Marine will receive counseling, though format and frequency will vary, depending on the Marine's grade, experience, position, and responsibilities.
- b. Counseling will commence when a Marine first joins a unit or when there is a change in the immediate supervisor of a Marine. The immediate supervisor is the next senior person - officer, SNCO, or NCO - who is directly responsible for the primary tasking and leadership of the junior Marine. Examples of these junior-senior relationships are: a gunnery sergeant counseling a staff sergeant; a major counseling a lieutenant; a captain counseling a gunnery sergeant; or a corporal counseling the fire team members. Seniors in the chain of command may also counsel subordinates as part of the seniors' responsibility of both grade and assignment. Counseling is not necessarily synonymous with being a fitness report writer, but being a fitness report writer is synonymous with counseling.
- c. The counseling process is divided into two separate tracks: lance corporals and below; corporals through colonel.

22 Jul 1986

(1) Lance corporals and below generally function in an environment where specific, detailed, and concrete guidance is required to accomplish the unit's mission. They will receive counseling every 30 days to ensure current and frequent feedback. Counseling will be conducted by the immediate supervisor, who is normally an NCO. Reservists are exempt from the 30-day counseling requirement. Reserve lance corporals and below will be counseled every 3 months and once during annual training duty.

(2) Corporals and above exercise more latitude and flexibility as part of their development and in the accomplishment of their mission. Counseling by the immediate supervisor will consist of an Initial Counseling Session (ICS) and subsequent follow-on sessions. The ICS should not be confused with the standard "welcome aboard" briefing. It shall take place approximately 30 days after a Marine checks into a new unit or when there is a change of immediate supervisor. This period should provide a mutual understanding of goals, tasks, responsibilities, and expected standards of performance and help to ensure a clear communication between the senior and junior. The first follow-on session should take place approximately 90 days later. This period will enable both the senior and junior to review the latter's progress and determine whether the Marine's efforts are on track. Subsequent follow-on sessions shall occur at a minimum of every 6 months, or more frequently if the need exists. These required sessions shall not replace daily coaching and event-related counseling, which are equally vital actions of counseling and are characteristic of an effective leader.

d. The reference contains a detailed description of the U.S. Marine Corps Counseling Program to include: the counseling process, types of counseling, benefits of counseling, planning and conducting a counseling session, counseling approaches and styles, and counseling practices related to performance. The reference shall be used by all Marines in accomplishing the requirements of this Order.

e. All counseling sessions will be conducted on an individual basis at all levels and for all grades. Additionally, it is recommended that some documentation of the counseling sessions be kept. Such would be along the lines of personal counseling notes. These notes would benefit both the senior and junior by serving as a quick reference in recalling the specifics of past counseling sessions. Essentially, the use of the small unit leader's/platoon commander's notebook is one method of recording the counseling notes. The reference has sample counseling forms which may be used if desired. If the commander elects to use the form, it can be used as provided or modified to fit the unit's needs and desires. The form, if used, should fit into the small unit leader's/platoon commander's notebook for ease of reference. Any record or documentation is for use only by the junior and senior. It is not to be forwarded to any officer in the reporting chain nor is it to be passed from one senior to the next when the junior-senior relationship ends. Since documentation used in the junior-senior relationship is no

longer required when that relationship terminates, counseling notes shall not be the subject of any inspection process.

6. Action

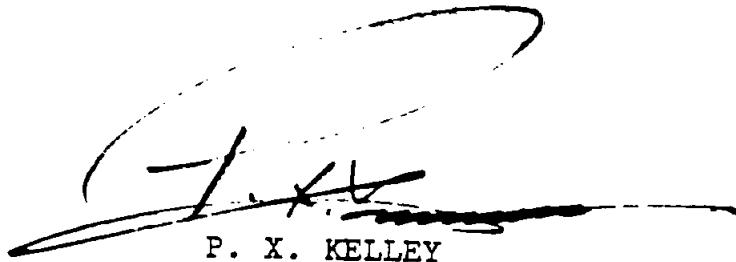
a. The Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower (CMC (M)) shall have cognizance over policy and sponsorship of the program.

b. The Deputy Chief of Staff for Training (SMS (T)) shall have cognizance over counseling education programs conducted in Marine Corps units and training institutions.

c. Commanding officers shall ensure maximum attention is given to establishing the techniques of counseling in officers, SNCO's, and NCO's. Additionally, they shall ensure that counseling is conducted per paragraphs 5c(1) and (2) of this Order.

d. All officers, SNCO's, and NCO's shall use the provisions of the reference in counseling their juniors.

7. Reserve Applicability. This Order is applicable to the Marine Corps Reserve.



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